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SUBJECT: GOVERNOR AGAR STRIKES PESSIMISTIC TONE IN MEETING WITH
ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION COMMISSION

Ref: Khartoum 1137

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In an October 14 meeting with members of the Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC), Malik Agar (SPLM), Governor of Blue Nile State, said that increasing numbers of Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the continued presence of Other Armed Groups (OAGs) in his state raise security concerns; emphasized the importance of elections for the much-anticipated popular consultations in his state, but stated that the 2010 elections were "already rigged". He decried what he termed the failure by the Government of Sudan (GoS) to release funds owed to the state. At a follow-on meeting, Ahmed Kermino (NCP), Blue Nile's Deputy Governor, told the AEC that Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) forces remained in Blue Nile in violation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), and that their presence would prevent free and fair elections from being held in some parts of Blue Nile. The noticeable lack of partnership between Agar, a practical moderate in the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the Deputy Governor is troubling, and contrasts with the effective partnership between the Governor and Deputy Governor in South Kordofan State (Ref). End Summary

SAF INCREASING, BUT BLUE NILE REMAINS PEACEFUL

¶2. (SBU) In an October 14 meeting with members of the AEC, Malik Agar, Governor of Blue Nile State told the group that there have been no significant, violent incidents in Blue Nile State. This important point was repeated by a number of other officials that the Working Group met in Blue Nile, including Deputy Governor Ahmed Kermino, Joint Integrated Units (JIU) commanders, and representatives of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS). Agar also noted that he did not expect violence to affect elections in Blue Nile.

¶3. (SBU) However, Agar did express concerns over security, particularly the increasing number of SAF forces and the continued presence of OAGs within the state. Regarding SAF forces, Agar said that, while the CPA calls for the reduction in armed forces to pre-war levels, in fact SAF forces in Blue Nile are both increasing in number and mechanizing. Note: In e-mail correspondence with PolOff on October 18, Svetlana Pencheva and Sheeza Jones, United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) Civil Affairs Officers for the cities of Ed Damazine and Kurmuk, respectively, confirmed that SAF forces are deploying or redeploying in Blue Nile. They also noted that SAF is entitled to deploy forces in northern states, including Blue Nile, and it is unclear to what extent SAF forces are increasing versus shifting locations. End Note.

¶4. (SBU) Regarding OAGs, which, pursuant to the CPA, should be demobilized or integrated into conventional forces, Agar noted the existence in Blue Nile of Popular Defense Forces, Mobile Defense

Forces, and Popular Police, each of which he said is affiliated with the SAF, but not officially part of military or civilian commander structures. Deputy Governor Kermino confirmed the existence of these forces, but claimed that they were paid by, and took their orders from, the SAF or the police, and were therefore part of the latter or former. . Kermino added that no security violations by these forces have been reported.

15. (SBU) Agar noted that while the SPLM is not comfortable with the security situation in Blue Nile, contrary to what some have claimed, neither Blue Nile nor South Kordofan will be the catalyst for a war in Sudan. Agar said that the people of Blue Nile and South Kordofan recognize that southern Sudan will not support a war that might jeopardize its right to a referendum. He noted, however, that if the referendum is blocked, "there will be a total war in Sudan, and Sudan will disintegrate".

DDR PROCESS CORRUPT AND JIUS "USELESS"

16. (SBU) Regarding the JIUs in Blue Nile, Agar raised commonly heard concerns regarding all JIUs in Sudan; the JIUs do not conduct joint training, nor are the SAF and SPLA components integrated in any manner. He said that in fact the JIUs are useless at best, and at worst they are dangerous civilians with weapons.

17. (SBU) Agar raised allegations of corruption in the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process in Blue Nile. He said that the commanders responsible for selecting the former combatants for DDR are from Khartoum, not Blue Nile, and due either to ignorance or corruption, these commanders selected people from

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Khartoum for DDR in Blue Nile. Note: While the UN oversees DDR and distributes benefit packages to DDR participants, SAF and SPLA commanders select the former combatants who are eligible for DDR, creating a significant potential for abuse. It is also possible, however, that internally displaced persons from Blue Nile, but living in Khartoum, were selected for DDR. End Note.

DEPUTY GOVERNOR SAYS SPLA PRESENCE VIOLATES CPA

18. (SBU) In Deputy Governor Kermino's meeting with the AEC he expressed concern regarding SPLA forces in Blue Nile. Kermino said that, in violation of the CPA, there were still significant SPLA forces in Blue Nile State, even in towns not controlled by the SPLA during the civil war. In Kurmuk, for instance, Kermino said that the SPLA controls the entry and exit of private citizens. Note: In a meeting with the AEC on October 14, Colonel Imran, Acting UNMIS Commander for Sector V, noted that while redeployment of SPLA forces out of Blue Nile is progressing, there are still SPLA forces there. The process of redeployment is complicated because SPLA fighters often have homes and families in Blue Nile, and come and go regularly, sometimes armed. Further, the border between Blue Nile State and Upper Nile State is not yet demarcated, allowing for further disputes as to whether SPLA forces are actually in Blue Nile State in violation of the CPA. End Note.

ELECTIONS KEY PREREQUISITE TO POPULAR CONSULTATIONS

19. (SBU) Agar said the fate of Blue Nile State is dependent on popular consultations, and that its people are therefore keen on elections, as popular consultations require an elected parliament in the state. Agar stated that the census results are rigged, and that if this is not resolved, there will not be elections as no party will choose to join pre-rigged elections. He also stated that the security law needs to be addressed for there to be free and fair elections. Agar repeated the SPLM position that popular consultations are a national issue and require a binding law be passed by the current session of the National Assembly. In response to a question as to what the popular consultations are in fact, he

said that legally the language is unclear, but that it is a process that will determine the aspirations of the people. He added that these aspirations could give rise to political and constitutional rights. Agar raised, and left unanswered, the question of what happens to popular consultations if there are no elections. In private remarks at the end of the meeting, in response to a statement that he would make a good President of Sudan, Agar dismissed elections in 2010 as already rigged, and suggested he might run in 2015.

¶10. (SBU) Deputy Governor Kermino was also pessimistic about elections in Blue Nile, but for different reasons. He said that certain regions of Blue Nile State, including Kurmuk County and western Bau County, would be unable to hold free elections because SPLA forces control these regions and arrest any non-SPLM member conducting election activity there. Regarding popular consultations, Kermino repeated the National Congress Party (NCP) position that there is no need for a national law regarding popular consultations, and said that the SPLM is talking about popular consultations too early. Kermino maintained that the NCP wants to follow the CPA, noting that the CPA says nothing about a national law governing the popular consultation process. He concluded that the results of the process should be referred to the Presidency. Note: In fact, the CPA says very little about popular consultations, including nothing about a national law governing the process or referring the results of the process to the Presidency. End Note.

DEVELOPMENT IN BLUE NILE OBSCURE OR NON-EXISTENT

¶11. (SBU) Agar said that in Ed Damazine, the capital of Blue Nile State, it is difficult to see any peace dividends, while outside the capital there are none at all. Agar blamed the GoS for the lack of progress, stating that the GoS has not released the development funds owed to Blue Nile State. Agar stated that any development work in his state is being done by NGOs, adding that this is an embarrassment for Sudan, as NGOs should be filling gaps, not providing basic services. Agar noted that when the NGOs were expelled in March, work on their projects simply stopped, but that some work has recently restarted. Regarding peace dividends, Kermino noted that an all-weather road now connects Ed Damazine to Kurmuk. Kermino acknowledged that international donors played a

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large part in this achievement, but also stated that donors had not fully implemented their role in development, while Khartoum's ability to aid Blue Nile is limited by the world financial crisis.

¶12. (SBU) Comment: Governor Agar is generally seen as a fairly practical leader in the SPLM, so his apparent pessimism regarding elections and hardening stance toward the NCP are troubling. Despite Agar's leaving unanswered the question of how popular consultations can go forward without valid elections, it seems likely that he has considered this question and come up with his own ideas, given his dismissal of elections in 2010 as already rigged. It is also unfortunate that the Governor and Deputy Governor appear to have separate agendas, and lack the effective partnership likely needed to deal with the variety of issues facing Blue Nile State in the next two years. End Comment.

WHITEHEAD